

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



# The Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and Political Action 1898-1908

## Le Congrès des Métiers du Travail du Canada et l'action politique 1898-1908

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Volume 22, numéro 2, 1967

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/027780ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/027780ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Robin, M. (1967). The Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and Political Action 1898-1908. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 22(2), 187-215.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/027780ar>

### Résumé de l'article

Cette étude porte sur l'action politique du CMTC et sur ses relations avec le mouvement politique socialiste dans la partie anglophone du Canada entre 1898 et 1908. Sur le plan politique les chefs syndicaux du CMTC étaient plutôt de tendance libérale quand les partis travaillistes indépendants et socialistes apparurent vers 1898. Les activités des adhérents de ces partis à l'intérieur du mouvement ouvrier constituèrent un sérieux défi pour les chefs syndicaux et aussi pour leurs politiques partisans traditionnelles.

C'est du Manitoba et de la Colombie Britannique que vinrent les premières pressions pour l'adoption par le CMTC d'un engagement politique plus indépendant. En effet dans ces deux provinces des politiciens travaillistes radicaux avaient obtenu un certain succès. Un référendum sur la représentation ouvrière indépendante fut pris au congrès du CMTC en 1899 mais les résultats furent insatisfaisants. Une résolution adoptée au congrès de 1900 favorisait l'élection du président du CMTC Ralph Smith, à la Chambre des Communes en tant que représentant d'un parti ouvrier indépendant.

A partir de ce moment l'engagement politique du CMTC se concrétisa et se développa rapidement. Au congrès de Brantford en 1901 l'exécutif du Congrès ratifia le principe de la représentation ouvrière indépendante et proposa une modernisation radicale des techniques de « lobbying ». Ce nouvel état d'esprit dans le CMTC s'amplifia l'année suivante au congrès de Berlin quand les Chevaliers du Travail, groupe conservateur d'unionistes, furent expulsés du CMTC et que Ralph Smith, sympathisant libéral fut remplacé par John Flett à la présidence du Congrès.

Ce virage vers la gauche effectué par le Congrès ne sanctionnait pas pour autant le socialisme ou le mouvement socialiste auquel était associée une faible minorité à l'intérieur du CMTC. Celle-ci fit des tentatives pour lancer le mouvement syndical vers la gauche. Ces tentatives échouèrent parce que leurs promoteurs en Colombie Britannique favorisaient autant le syndicalisme industriel que le syndicalisme de métier. Cette prise de position fut interprétée par les membres du CMTC comme du socialisme politique et comme contribuant à diviser le mouvement ouvrier au lieu de l'unifier. C'est pour ces raisons que les chefs socialistes furent tenus à l'écart des congrès du CMTC. Dans les années qui suivirent le célèbre congrès de Berlin, le CMTC continua à soutenir le principe de la représentation indépendante mais évita d'endosser le nouveau mouvement socialiste ou de mettre sur pied un organisme pour créer un parti ouvrier national.

En 1906 cependant la conjoncture était favorable à un affrontement entre les tenants de la représentation ouvrière et les socialistes à l'intérieur du Congrès. Il eut lieu au congrès de Victoria en Colombie Britannique. A ce congrès on vota en faveur de la création d'un parti ouvrier canadien et on rejeta le Parti socialiste du Canada et ce même si en Colombie Britannique il était considéré comme le « bras politique normal du mouvement ouvrier organisé ». Des congrès subséquents furent tenus par les sections provinciales du Parti ouvrier canadien en Alberta, au Manitoba, en Colombie Britannique et en Ontario. Les socialistes dominèrent les congrès qui eurent lieu en Alberta et en Colombie Britannique et c'est pourquoi ces mêmes congrès reconnuèrent le Parti Socialiste du Canada comme représentant le travail organisé sur le plan politique. On essaya en vain de légitimer cette ingérence socialiste aux congrès du CMTC en 1907 et en 1908. Dans les autres congrès qui précédèrent la première guerre mondiale, aucun effort ne fut fait pour relancer le Parti ouvrier canadien agonisant, reconnaître le Parti socialiste du Canada ou régler les chicanes entre les factions politiques traditionnelles.

# The Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and Political Action: 1898-1908

Martin Robin

*An examination of the politics of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and its relationship with the radical political movement in English — speaking Canada between 1898 and 1908. The Congress moved left in the years around the turn of the Century and supported the principle of independent labour representation but refrained from endorsing the new Socialist movement. A Canadian Labour Party was launched in 1906 but socialists and independent laborites in the Congress remained unreconciled and the new party failed to get off the ground.*

## Introduction

The existence of minor socialist and independent labour parties in English-speaking Canada has always confronted the leadership of the organized labour movement with a problem. Canadian labour leaders have been faced with the choice of either maintaining their ties with the traditional Liberal and Conservative major parties, or diverting the political resources of organized labour into support for minor third parties with only faint or moderate chances of success. Labour leaders could follow the American pattern and vehemently oppose any ventures into third party politics; or they could emulate their British compatriots who, at the turn of the century, forged an « open and honourable » alliance between the organized labour movement on the one hand, and the independent labour and socialist parties on the other. The contemporary leaders of the Canadian Labour Congress have opted for the British pattern, but this has occurred only after decades of bitter strife within the labour movement since the very inception of radical working class politics in Canada.

The leaders of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, the legislative mouthpiece of organized labour in Canada since 1883, were

predominantly Liberal in persuasion when socialist and independent labour parties began to spread in the 1890's. Leading Congress officials like D.J. O'Donoghue, Charles March, George Dower and P.J. Jobin were active Grit party workers and the hegemony of the Liberal Party within the upper echelons of organized labour dated back to the mid '70's when the artisan class was wrested from the benevolent grasp of Sir John A. MacDonald's party of Union and Progress.<sup>1</sup> The sudden emergence of radical labour parties in the mid '90's, and the appearance of their spokesmen within Congress conventions, constituted a serious challenge to the entrenched leaders and their traditional posture of partisan political alignments.

Although Ontario was the cradle of early socialism in Canada, the centre of gravity of the new radical politics concentrated mainly in Manitoba and British Columbia. It was from the western provinces that pressure was exerted to change the Congress's political line. The Socialist Labor Party and Canadian Socialist League, the earliest socialist organizations to take root in Canada, first appeared in Ontario, but both were denied admission to the T.L.C., failed to achieve any substantial following, and neglected electoral politics in favour of « pure » educational and propaganda activity.<sup>2</sup> Radical working men in Winnipeg, however, were a good deal more practical. An Independent Labor Party, the first in the country, was organized in 1895, and branches of the Canadian Socialist League were established four years later.<sup>3</sup> The independent labour and socialist organizations combined with the Central Trades and Labor Council to nominate labour editor A.W. Puttee to contest the federal bi-election in 1899, necessitated by the resignation of Liberal representative R.W. Jamieson.

The political activities of the Winnipeg unionists were complemented by similar activities in British Columbia where radical labour parties flourished throughout the 1890's.<sup>4</sup> Independent labour sup-

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(1) OSTRY, BERNARD, « Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in the 1870's », *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XLI, 1960; and « Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in the 1880's », *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. XXVII, May, 1961.

(2) The SLP was an offshoot of the American party formed in 1894 by Daniel DeLeon. The CSL, a moderate christian-socialist organization, first appeared in 1899.

(3) *The Voice*, Feb. 13, 1895 and Dec. 21, 1899.

(4) LOOSEMORE, T.R., « The British Columbia Labour Movement and Political Action, 1879-1906 », M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of British Columbia, 1954.

porters in the coast province achieved their greatest success in the provincial election of 1898 when five candidates were successfully returned. In a legislature consisting of a shifting coalition of political groups, the labour group held the balance of power and was able to extact a host of measures favourable to the labor interest.<sup>5</sup>

### The Congress Moved Left at the Turn of the Century

The legislative accomplishments of the small balancing labour group in the British Columbia legislature, together with the nomination of Puttee in Manitoba, brought the question of independent labour representation to the fore inside the September 1899 convention of the Trades and Labor Congress. The Manitoba and British Columbia representatives were convinced of the necessity and efficacy of independent political action and proceeded to press their views with great vigor. The Manitoba Executive reported favourably on a

...movement toward securing direct labor representation in the Dominion Parliament. The organized labor forces of Winnipeg have come to the conclusion that to meet and pass resolutions in favour of better government in the interests of labor without backing it up at election times is of use only for its educational effects and stops there.<sup>6</sup>

Puttee addressed the convention in support of political action and pointed to British Columbia, Australia, and New Zealand where labour M.P.'s sat in parliament. The British Columbia Executive Committee reported its interviews with the provincial government had been crowned with success, noted that the government had received strong support from the labour members of the legislature and congratulated Ralph

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(5) The labour group, consisting of R.F. Green, Ralph Smith, R.D. McKechnie, Robert MacPherson and F. Carter-Cotton, supported the Semlin government during the 1894 session and were able to gain a number of important concessions including an amendment to the Mines Regulation Act, a ban on the employment of Chinese underground, an amendment to the Master and Servant Act, and, most radical of all, the eight hour day in metal mining. See F.B. Mercer, « Political Groups in British Columbia: 1883-1898 », M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of British Columbia, 1937, for a discussion of the « group » nature of British Columbia politics at this time.

(6) *Proceedings of the 15th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, 1899*, p. 12.

Smith and Robert MacPherson for their «unremitting efforts and unflagging zeal.»<sup>7</sup>

The Western pressure resulted in the introduction of a resolution in favour of independent political action by John Flett, Congress Vice-president from Hamilton, and seconded by James Wilkes, which asserted that petitions and interviews were useless and that the only solution to the labor question was «direct representation in the various houses of Parliament on lines similar to the organized workers of Great Britain, British Columbia, New Zealand and Australia...»<sup>8</sup> It further made the unprecedented assertion that labour members found on platforms of the old parties should be regarded with suspicion as «decoys of the wage earners and opponents of the advanced labor movement.» A referendum vote on labour representation was provided for. The resolution passed after «animated discussion». A second resolution urging «moral and financial assistance» was rejected by the Committee on Standing Rules and Resolutions.<sup>9</sup>

The first test of the new independent labour program was in Winnipeg where A.W. Puttee ran against Edward Martin, an independent, in a two-way contest. Neither the Liberals or Conservatives contested the election.<sup>10</sup> Puttee ran on a platform littered with labour reform planks — direct legislation, initiative and referendum, public ownership of all natural monopolies and the single tax. He won by eight votes.<sup>11</sup>

*The Voice* gave an amusing account of the entrance of organized labour's first successful parliamentary representative into the august chamber:

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(7) Three of the four members of the B.C. Executive Committee were from Rossland where the Western Federation of Miners was fighting to enforce the eight hour day passed in the Provincial Legislature.

(8) *Proceedings of the 15th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1899, p. 23.

(9) *The Montreal Herald* noted that «the change in the attitude of the Congress was sudden and significant, and another proof of how the Congress is being dominated by the energetic young men of the West. Mr. Ralph Smith had done good work for the B.C. labor men and has opened the eyes of the West to possibilities of reform in the political field. The Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council will bring out Mr. Puttee, editor of *The Voice* as a labor candidate in the next election. The Toronto, Hamilton, London and other Ontario delegates are strong for political action but they don't believe that an independent programme would be so effective at present in their cities as it might be farther West». As quoted in *The Voice*, September 29, 1899.

(10) *The Voice*, January 19, 1900.

(11) *The Voice*, February 9, 1900.

The new member in advancing to salute the speaker passed upon the opposition side of the mace, which caused the gentlemen on that side of the house to applaud prodigiously. After « shaking » the new member retraced his steps, turned to the right and sought a seat in the « independent corner » which caused the government side to take up applause amid a general laugh.<sup>12</sup>

Puttee finally sat at a desk « way in the corner on the right side of the House ».

Puttee's successful election and early activities in Parliament spurred the Manitoba Executive Committee to again take the lead within the Congress in pressing for the creation of an independent labour party. The Executive reported to the Ottawa convention in September, 1900, that « Even in the short time of one session... the immense benefit of experienced labor representation in the Dominion Parliament was made wonderfully apparent ».<sup>13</sup> The presence of one direct representative of labour, the Committee noted, had removed « Whatever doubts may have existed in the minds of labor men as to the wisdom of the course of which we notified the Congress last year... »<sup>14</sup> The British Columbia Executive supported the views of the Manitoba group, stressed the need for independent representation, and decried the overthrow of the provincial Semlin administration, « ... a government which placed more legislation in the interest of the labouring people on the statute books of our Province in the single session of 1899 than all the governments that have held power since this Province has been a constituted commonwealth ».<sup>15</sup> The Committee recognized the necessity of creating a Provincial Federation of Labor to act as an instrument for developing a « uniform plan of action in political campaigns ».<sup>16</sup>

There were other new political developments at the Convention. A resolution was passed recommending that efforts be made to elect Congress president Ralph Smith to the House of Commons, and the Congress Executive was instructed to petition the Miners' Union at Nanaimo urging them to take the initiative in securing a seat for Smith

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(12) *The Voice*, February 16, 1900.

(13) *Proceedings of the 16th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1900, p. 12.

(14) *Ibid.*

(15) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

(16) *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

as an « Independent Labor Party » representative.<sup>18</sup> H. Stevenson and A.W. Puttee were endorsed as I.L.P. representatives in the approaching federal election. On the subject of the referendum vote taken after the last convention on the advisability of independent political action, the Committee on the President's Address and Executive's Report felt that it was not justified in making any recommendation since the vote polled did not « indicate to a sufficient extent the actual position of the organized bodies of the Dominion ».<sup>19</sup> Puttee's campaign manager, John Mortimer, and John Flett moved an amendment to the Report stating that the results were sufficiently strong to warrant further action.<sup>20</sup> A fierce debate ensued with Robert Clockling, O'Donoghue and John Appleton of Winnipeg, all Liberal politicians, opposing the amendment. By a vote of 38 to 22, the resolution passed with the Quebec representatives of the Knights of Labor composing the bulk of the opposition.<sup>21</sup>

The growing concern with effective representation was equally evident at the Brantford convention of 1901. The Congress executive now endorsed the principle of « independent labor representation » and reported the elections of Smith and Puttee had been of « incalculable benefit to the Dominion, and more especially so as regards the interests of the working people of Canada ».<sup>22</sup> The report went further and proposed a radical streamlining of lobbying technique. It dismissed the « merely perfunctory methods » of the past and the « almost utter uselessness of formal and always very brief interviews » with a « Premier and only one or two of his colleagues of the Government (no matter what party happened to be in power) at Ottawa ».<sup>23</sup> More comprehensive interviews were recommended together with the appointment of a full-time parliamentary solicitor to watch over legislation and prepare bills for submission to the Parliament and legislatures. The submission of prepared bills would enable the Congress to keep a record of the voting performances of proxy labour friends, thereby enabling the trade unions to better reward their friends and punish the enemies:

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(17) *Ibid.*, p. 20.

(18) *Ibid.* Smith was subsequently elected but sat as a Laurier Liberal.

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

(20) *Ibid.*, p. 22.

(21) *Vancouver Daily Province*, September 20, 1900. *The Voice*, September 21, 1900.

(22) *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1901, p. 10.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Candidates seeking the suffrages of the electorate, especially in cities and towns where the labor vote is a factor, are invariable loud in their expressions of sympathy with the workingman. Their friendship is not lacking then. It is not merely friendship and sympathy the toilers require, but measures and public Acts which will better their condition. If this method of action were adopted, we could at least keep a record of some of those members who say they are in favor of labor measures, when looking for votes, but when elected do little or nothing in that direction. <sup>24</sup>

There was much criticism at the convention of the Liberal affiliations and political prudence of leading Congress figures. The Manitoba executive reminded the Congress that the election of Puttee and Ralph Smith to the Dominion House and the campaign of Christopher Foley in British Columbia, nearly successful, was of vital importance to the labour movement generally, and that « whenever such men are put in the field, they should receive the pecuniary support of this Congress... » <sup>25</sup> A motion was put asking that employers of the « inside service » of the provincial and Dominion government be debarred from entrance to the Congress, a swipe at O'Donoghue and others who maintained their voting privileges despite government jobs and who often sat for mixed Knights of Labor assemblies conveniently designed for representatives who had left their trade and calling. <sup>26</sup> It was defeated 47 to 20 but probably received the combined support of radicals and Tories. <sup>27</sup>

The T.L.C.'s new independent mood was reinforced by David Carey, Congress President during the two years before the accession of Smith, and fraternal delegate to the American Federation of Labor Convention in December, 1900 who told the delegates he was « forcibly struck » by the absence from the A.F. of L. platform of party politicians, an obvious reference to the Ottawa Congress Convention addressed by Laurier and Sir William Mulock, and to President Ralph Smith's stated approval of « bringing the leaders of public opinion in direct contact with the leaders of labor ». <sup>28</sup> Carey stated that the Americans had taught him that labour « must be governed by labor pure and simple » and that politicians should be left « severely alone »:

(24) *Ibid.*

(25) *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

(26) O'Donoghue had been for years an employee of the Provincial Government before becoming Fair Wages Officer for the Federal Government.

(27) *Daily Colonist*, October 6, 1901.

(28) *Proceedings of the 16th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1900, p. 3.



We cannot disguise the fact, gentlemen, that at home in Canada it would be better for the movement if less prominence were given to the heads of governments and opposition parties at the meetings of our Trades Congress . . . it would be better for labor and its leaders in this country to follow the example of the American Federation of Labor and confine the future in a stricter sense of legislation for labor pure and simple.<sup>29</sup>

The election of A.F. of L. organizer John Flett to the Congress presidency, the new concern with «rewarding friends and punishing enemies», and with strengthening the pressure group power of the Congress reflected the growing influence of A.F. of L. unions within the Congress. International union hegemony was assured at the Berlin convention when the Constitution was amended to exclude the Knights of Labor and other independent national unions considered by the international delegates to be «questionable representation».<sup>30</sup> The result of the revision was the loss of 23 organizations, many of which were Knights Assemblies from Quebec.<sup>31</sup> The mixed assemblies of the Knights had provided an entry point into Congress deliberations for ex-trade unionists with government or Liberal party jobs.<sup>32</sup> They were closely integrated with the Liberal party machine in Montreal, Toronto and Quebec City and supported Smith's presidency and the new federal Liberal cause of national unionism.<sup>33</sup>

The ousting of the Knights, the defeat of the cause of Liberal National Unionism, the replacement of Ralph Smith by John Flett as president, Smith's attempted repudiation of partyism during his presidential address, the reconstruction of the Congress as an effective lobby, and the endorsement of independent representation, all testified to a move «left» by the Congress. The new politics had plainly made itself felt within the national legislative mouthpiece of organized labor. Phillips Thompson, a leading socialist theoretician, approved of the ousting of the Knights as tending to eliminate «a class of... fakers who

(29) *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1901, pp. 57.

(30) *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1902, p. 8.

(31) LOGAN, H.A., *Trade Unions in Canada*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1948, p. 73.

(32) *Daily Colonist*, October 6, 1901.

(33) The Knights in Montreal were assembled in an organization known as the Central Trades and Labor Council, a dual body to the exclusively international Council of Federated Trades. The *Industrial Banner* described the Knights' representation as «a little clique built upon bogus labels».

have worked in the movement for personal and party ends ». <sup>34</sup> He saw in Smith's attempted repudiation of partyism and advance over earlier years when « men possessing the confidence of labour bodies could openly and above board appear in party platforms and few found fault ». <sup>35</sup> *The Voice* went further and described the struggle between the old unionists and the new as « nothing more or less than what is known as modern socialism ». <sup>36</sup>

*The Voice's* assessment was hardly accurate. The new look scarcely derived from a concern with or endorsement of socialism. The A.F. of L., dominated by Samuel Gompers' philosophy of pure and simple trade unionism, stood vehemently opposed to the Socialist Party of America, as did most of its constituent unions. It endorsed independent labour representation so long as this meant rewarding friends and punishing enemies in the major parties. The T.L.C.'s support of independent representation was, at this stage, scarcely different.

The endorsement of « independent representation » rather than the socialism derived from a number of sources, the principal one being simply that the vast majority of delegates to the Congress convention were not socialists and the new socialism was still a fledgeling movement with little immediate prospect of substantial electoral success outside of British Columbia. Because the socialists were meagrely represented in the House of Parliament and at Congress conventions, Congress officials could afford to ignore them. But the new socialist explosion in British Columbia following the turn of the century, had been carried on a wave of industrial unionism opposed to the craft union-dominated T.L.C. and A.F. of L. <sup>37</sup> This presented the Congress with serious problems. The T.L.C. could lobby Ottawa, support friends and punish enemies effectively only if it campaigned as the « national legislative mouthpiece » of organized labour. But insofar as the British Columbia industrial union socialists fostered dual unionism and thereby weakened the Congress in the second most highly industrialized and unionized province in the Dominion, there developed an opposition of interest which blocked a rapprochement at the political level.

(34) *Western Socialist*, October 11, 1902.

(35) *Ibid.* Smith vehemently denied in his presidential address that the Congress was being run by « party politicians ».

(36) *The Voice*, September 5, 1902.

(37) Two socialists, Parker Williams and J.H. Hawthornthwaite, were elected in the provincial election of 1903. The Socialist Party of Canada commanded a much larger following than any of the labour or reform parties.

The hostility of many industrial union socialists in the West to the Trades and Labor Congress, and the opposition of the Congress leaders to the « dual unionism » fostered by socialists in the coast province, proved a serious obstacle to the development of an integrated socialist and labour movement. The industrial unions opposed to the A.F. of L. were gathered together in a central organization known as the American Labor Union, the principle affiliates of which were the Western Federation of Miners and the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees.<sup>38</sup> The spread of these unions into British Columbia was accompanied by a series of strikes so bitter that Ralph Smith wrote to Laurier in April 1903, warning him that British Columbia society was on the verge of breaking up into two armed camps « just as Marx had predicted ». <sup>39</sup> The U.B.R.E. strike in particular, following close on the heels of the Fishermen's strike of 1900 and a series of miners' disputes, struck a chord of sympathy among unionists throughout the West, hampered the task of extending the influence of the T.L.C. and, what is most important, identified « political socialism » with « dual unionism ». The strike was preceded and followed by a number of secessions from the National Congress and by severe criticism of Congress officials by socialist unionists.

The effects of the new industrial socialist campaign against T.L.C. leadership and policies were evident at the Brampton convention of 1901 where Ralph Smith warned the delegates in his presidential address of the dangers of playing into the hands of their opponents by « manifesting of mistrust of those who are the elected leaders of the movement all over the country ». <sup>40</sup> Organized capital, Smith argued, always encouraged its managers by expressions of confidence, but very often labour unions allowed themselves to be influenced by propaganda against their leaders. Smith reported that he found unrest and disillusionment with the accredited leadership and dissension between organizations throughout the country. The miner-preacher equated the

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(38) The W.F.M. affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in 1896, but withdrew the same year when no support was forthcoming from the central body during a bitter labor war in Leadville. It helped form the Western Labor Union in 1899, which became the American Labor Union three years later. The U.B.R.E. was formed in January, 1901, in San Francisco by George Estes, an « industrial socialist », who sought to unite all of the railway unions into one big union.

(39) Ralph Smith to Sir Wilfred Laurier, April 4, 1903, *Laurier Papers*, Public Archives of Canada.

(40) *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1901, p. 7.

extremists of the « professional socialistic societies » who criticized orthodox trade unionism with the infidels arrayed against the churches:

Those who refuse to give any credit for good to these institutions ignore the common facts of history and the common observation of every-day life. The true reformer will admit the degree of good in all institutions — even those he would not be content to associate himself with. They are all good in some degree; some do a greater good than others, but the professional reformer who thinks he can advance a cause by claiming perfection for his own pet institution by nothing but denunciation of all the rest, is as foolish as an individual who proposes to prosper in society by the principle of antagonism to the rest of it.<sup>41</sup>

Opposition to Smith's leadership grew so intense following the U.B. of R.E. strike that there was some question whether he would attend the Berlin convention as an accredited delegate. During the spring of 1902, Smith visited England to attend the coronation and wrote a letter to the Nanaimo Miners' Union requesting credentials as a delegate to the coming session of the Congress at his own expense.<sup>42</sup> The letter lay unanswered for three months while the miners debated whether to withdraw altogether from the Congress and affiliate with the Western Federation of Miners, a socialist organization that Smith consistently fought. As president of the Congress, Smith had the power to open the session but without attending as an elected union representative, he would be unable to preside or sit as a voting delegate unless he joined one of the numerous mixed Knights assemblies which were suited for that purpose, or received credentials from another trade union. Smith returned to Nanaimo in early September and, after frantic jockeying, the miners decided to take a referendum. A secret ballot was taken by the members as they left the pit.<sup>43</sup> J.H. Watson, Congress organizer in British Columbia and a strong supporter of Smith, accused the leaders of the anti-Congress movement of being supplied with money by the « big capitalists » and others with the avowed purpose of spreading socialism.<sup>44</sup> Smith assured his supporters he would attend the Congress as its president even if he had to do it at his own expense, although he was unwilling to run for re-election.<sup>45</sup> The vote went against the Congress

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(41) *Ibid.*

(42) *Western Clarion*, August 23, 1902.

(43) *Western Clarion*, July 5, 1902.

(44) Letter to *Victoria Times* as quoted in the *Western Clarion*, September 6, 1902.

(45) *The Voice*, September 12, 1902.

264 to 260 and Smith left for Vancouver where he signified his intention to take up J.H. Watson's offer to attend as a delegate of a Vancouver union.

Smith finally made it to the Berlin convention. In his presidential address, he again attacked the socialists as enemies of trade unionism, I have just one thing to say against any persons who denounce the usefulness of trade unions and its (sic) leaders, and that is, they are not the friends of the laboring classes ». <sup>46</sup> He denied the oft-repeated charge that the Congress was run by party politicians and blamed the accusers with obstructing the spread of the national organization into the West:

A great injury is being done by the cry put up that the Congress is being run by « party politicians ». This falsehood we have good reason to believe is enunciated by professed friends of the Congress, and is one of those calumnies which is doing great injury to the Congress amongst the people of the West, where its work has not the same opportunity of being known. <sup>47</sup>

He was soon moved from attacking the maligners of the Congress to defending himself. The officers of the Phoenix central council had circulated a letter to delegates of « known socialist sympathies » severely condemning the Congress president as a traitor to the working class. Smith rose on a question of privilege and asked that the letter be read before the assembly, which then went into a committee of the whole. The letter, a remarkable document, condemned the Congress as being an « appendage of a capitalist party » rather than a body « devoted to the advancement of the interests of the working people of Canada ». <sup>48</sup> They believed this applied generally to the rank and file of accredited delegates, but more particularly to the executive officers and leading spirits of the organization. The general indirectment of the Congress was followed by specific charges against Smith. He had acted as a Liberal partisan in the House of Commons and taken the stump in the Liberal interests. He had carried a pass of the C.P.R. and was Hon. James Dunsmuir's brother-in-law. <sup>49</sup> The « president and pontiff » of Canadian labour was further berated for conspiring with James Dunsmuir

(46) *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1902, p. 14.

(47) *Ibid.*, p. 16.

(48) *Ibid.*, p. 56.

(49) Smith had in fact run in the election of 1894 against Dunsmuir's brother-in-law.

to abolish the check-off of union dues in the latter's coal company. Finally, he was said to have had a worse record on independence than some Liberals.<sup>50</sup> A special committee was appointed to which was referred the correspondence and charges against the Congress president. It printed a report vindicating the Congress and declared the alleged statements « most unjustifiable and palpably untrue ».<sup>51</sup> Smith decided against contesting the presidency. He made a parting speech at a banquet given by the trade unionists of Berlin where he urged labouring men to realize that other people had rights as well as themselves — « Get all you can, demand all you can, but on the other hand, never break your contract; play the man and always make the employer feel that you are a reasonable man. He concluded with the assertion that the tyranny of the mass of workers over their leaders was « worse than the tyranny of Capital over Labour ».<sup>52</sup>

Sympathy for the socialist industrial union cause and criticism of the T.L.C. and Railway brotherhoods prevailed in union centres throughout 1902. In Winnipeg, the Central Trades and Labor Council and the Winnipeg Labor Party endorsed the U.B.R.E.<sup>53</sup> In July, 1902, 10,000 people gathered in the provincial capital to attend a meeting in support of the new union called by the Winnipeg Labor Party. William Scott, an executive of the Central Trades Council, told the assembled multitude that the exploitation of the Dominion would « go down to prosterity alongside the conquest of Peru and the partition of Poland as one of the blackest pages of human history ».<sup>54</sup> The Manitoba Executive Committee deplored the actions of the Railway brotherhoods in « disregarding the broad principles of cooperative action between unions as well as individuals » and claimed that it constituted « the blackest page in the history of trade unionism in Manitoba ».<sup>55</sup> Unions in British Columbia went beyond criticism to outright secession. In early September, the Phoenix Trades and Labor Council endorsed the Socialist

(50) *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1902, p. 57.

(51) *Ibid.*, p. 64.

(52) *The Voice*, September 26, 1902.

(53) *Ibid.*, August 29, 1902.

(54) *Ibid.*, July 18, 1902.

(55) *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1902, p. 47.

party « in view of the hostility to labor interests exhibited by the old parties of Canada; and particularly by the Liberal Party now in power as instanced by the nonenforcement of the Alien Labour Law, the Rossland Strike, and in various other ways », and withdrew from the Congress.<sup>56</sup> The Fernie Trades and Labor Council refused to affiliate. « With all due respect to the many sincere persons who are united with the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada — in our estimation it is merely a creation of the Liberal and Tory parties, as was clearly proven at the last convention, by turning down that resolution which excluded delegates who were officials of the government ». <sup>57</sup> When Ralph Smith returned to Nanaimo after the Berlin convention he found the Nanaimo Miners Union had been formally constituted a local of the Western Federation of Miners. He resigned the secretaryship.<sup>58</sup> In Victoria a « mild form of upheaval » in the Trades and Labor Council occurred when the A.L.U. received considerable support from the socialists who came to dominate the central labor council.<sup>59</sup> A wave of enthusiasm for the industrial union cause swept the city contemporaneous with the U.B.R.E. strike, and the socialists took a leading part in a « miniature campaign instituted against the Trades and Labor Congress... » <sup>60</sup> The Council briefly withdrew from the Congress and established contacts with the American Labor Union. Two veteran trade unionists, J.H. Watson and George Bartley reported, « the oldtime workers, the more prominent of whom being classed by the political socialists and radicals as « fakers », etc., have temporarily stepped aside and allowed the political socialists to run their course, so far as the local Labor Council is concerned ». <sup>61</sup>

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(56) *Western Clarion*, September 6, 1902.

(57) *Ibid.*, May 26, 1903.

(58) *Daily Colonist*, September 21, 1902.

(59) *Proceedings of the 19th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1903, p. 30.

(60) *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

(61) *Ibid.*, p. 32. Watson later blamed the weak condition of the union movement in the city on « the socialist influences... in the shape of new organization, which have sprung into existence within the last six months... ». He decried the decline of piety among the proletariat, « Men's whole natures must be changed to the pattern of the giver of the thirteenth commandment, Jesus Christ himself, before they can ever think of doing this. Fancy a state of socialism being worked out by the present exponents of the doctrine, most of whom never go into a church, but all of whom meet on a Sunday night to discuss the economic questions of the day and sing « The Marseillaise ». *Independent*, May 30, 1903.

By flirting with dual unionist tactics, the socialists isolated themselves from the mainstream of organized labour, minimized their effectiveness within the labour political movement, and by default, guaranteed the hegemony within the Congress of Liberal and Conservative politicians and supporters of « independent labor representation ». During the years following the important Berlin convention, the T.L.C. steadfastly refrained from endorsing the new Socialist Party of Canada, or setting up machinery to create a national Independent Labor Party. In 1904, the Congress again endorsed the principle of « independent representation » and at the 1905 convention, the Executive Committee commended the labour reformers of London for supporting the Conservative Adam Beck in the Ontario provincial election, and then switching their loyalty to the Liberal Hon. Charles Hyman in the federal by-election, thus approving the policy of rewarding friends and punishing enemies — « If the laborers of Canada, generally, would act in the same way », the report concluded, « it would be but a short time before independent labor candidates would occupy seats on the floor of Parliament in large numbers ». <sup>62</sup>

### **A Canadian Labour Party was Launched in 1906**

By 1906, however, conditions were ripe for a direct encounter between Grit and Tory politicians, the supporters of labour representation, and the socialists. The surge of dual unionism subsided with the collapse of the U.B.R.E. strike and the weakness of the Western Federation of Miners which was struggling for its existence during the great labor wars fought in Colorado in 1902-1905. In 1905 the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council rejoined the Congress and intense efforts made during the year following the Berlin convention to organize in the West met with success. Socialist representation among the new Congress affiliates was high, and the location of the 1906 T.L.C. convention in Victoria guaranteed a high turnout of radical delegates.

The advocates of independent labour representation were encouraged by a number of events preceding the Victoria convention. The cause of labour representation had sustained a minor setback with the

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(62) *Proceedings of the 21st Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, 1905*, p. 15.



desertion of Ralph Smith and the defeat of Puttee,<sup>63</sup> but the election of Congress president Alphonse Verville in a by-election in Maisonneuve in the city of Montreal renewed faith in the desirability and possibility of electing working men to Parliament. The sudden success of the Labour Party in Great Britain in 1906 and the declaration of the A.F. of L. in favour of « independent political action » in the same year were further spurs to action. Eugene Debs visited Toronto early in the year, and told *The World* that labour in Canada was in a « more healthy condition than in the United States ». <sup>64</sup> Ramsay Macdonald arrived in Canada in August fresh from the Labour Party success and toured the country exhorting the working men to take political action along British lines. <sup>65</sup> Macdonald found the Canadian movement divided and acknowledged that the best prospect for the Labour Party prevailed in British Columbia where the trades union movement was mainly political. British Columbia, he maintained, could be captured at once if the matter were gone about in the proper way. <sup>66</sup>

When the Trades and Labor Congress convened in Victoria in September, the stage was set for the important debate on political action. Congress solicitor O'Donoghue admitted that the eastern delegates were wary as to the action to be taken by the socialists and the strength they would display at the convention. <sup>67</sup> President Verville

(63) Smith and Puttee had split in their attitudes to the Laurier government. Their differences became open during the last session of Parliament in 1904. In July, 1903, the Grand Trunk Pacific Contract was up for approval. Smith had gone home « on account of sickness » and remained there to campaign in the local elections. Puttee moved a government ownership amendment to the government railway proposition during the 1904 « railway session ». Smith spoke in favour of the government Bill and supported the contract, explaining that he did not favour government ownership of the railways until such time as the people had shown their preference for acquiring the provincial railways. The Committee on the President's Address at the 1904 Congress convention condemned the « reformers and friends of labour who voted against public ownership and control of the Grand Trunk Pacific ». Smith ran as a Liberal in Nanaimo against the Socialist, William Fenton, a Nanaimo politician from Northumberland. Puttee faced a three-way fight in Winnipeg. Smith won and Puttee lost. Addressing his supporters following this election, Smith attributed Puttee's defeat to his sinister friends. « . . . I told Mr. Puttee many times he was mistaken in his opposition to the government which in my opinion was a good government and worthy of support. If ever there was a conscientious man in the House of Commons it was Arthur Puttee, but he has failed and why? The secret of his failure was that he was surrounded by a gang of extreme Socialists and he permitted himself to be led by these men; they took him by the throat and demanded that he do as they wanted him to or they would defeat him ». *Ibid.*, November 18, 1904.

(64) *Canadian Annual Review*, Vol. VI, 1906, p. 301.

(65) *Ibid.*

(66) *Ibid.*

(67) *The Voice*, October 26, 1906.

opened the proceedings with references to the recent labour successes in Great Britain and Maisonneuve:

It is significant that immediately following upon the success of the Labour Party in Great Britain, the workmen of Canada, upon the first occasion given to them, demonstrated their ability to forsake party ties in support of one from their own ranks... »<sup>68</sup>

He predicted the approaching elections in the United States and Canada would witness « a tremendous upheaval among working men... »

The debate on political action took place on the fourth day when the Victoria Trades and Labor Council moved a resolution that a Canadian Labor Party be formed. R.P. Pettipiece, present as a delegate of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, moved that the principles and program of the Socialist Party of Canada be endorsed by the Congress. Congress vice-president James Simpson of the Toronto Typographical Union No. 91 and Frank Sherman of District No. 18 of U.M.W.A. proposed a compromise measure:

That, whereas, the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada has always stood as the recognized legislative mouthpiece of the wage workers of Canada, and has expressed from time to time the sentiment and aspirations of those in affiliation; and has made representations to existing Governments to legislate in the interests of the wage workers, and, whereas, the conventions of this Congress have always been the open forum where labor men could express their opinions on all questions, political, economic, social, etc., with that freedom which makes possible the continual advancement of civilization, and the ultimate emancipation of the working classes, and, whereas, there are honest differences of opinion as to a correct political programme in the interests of the working class, but at the same time an almost unanimous opinion that both the Liberal and Conservative parties are merely committees of the capitalist class; and, whereas, the political movement in the interests of the working classes has already assumed definite organization in different parts of Canada, as either the Socialist Party or the Independent Labor Party; therefore, be it resolved, that this Congress affirm it the individual right of the wage workers of Canada to organize themselves into either a Socialist or Independent Labor Party, separate and distinct from this Congress, and that in our opinion the highest interests of this Congress can be served if we continue as a legislative body entirely, looking to either

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(68) *Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, 1906, p. 7.*

the Socialist or Independent Labor Party to prompt such legislation as this Congress shall determine in convention and through our Eexecutive Committe from time to time ; and that we further express our conviction that it will be in the best interests of the wage workers of Canada if they will voluntarily sever their connection with all parties not organized in the interests of the proletarian class.<sup>69</sup>

Simpson and Sherman recognized the regional disparity in Socialist support and were intent on having the Congress endorse the principle of « local autonomy » on the question of independent representation. It was soon evident, however, that the great majority of delegates would not settle for the Socialist Party as labour's political voice in any province. Both Simpson and Pettipiece admitted they were bound by party loyalty not to vote for any « trade unionist », and Pettipiece's practical argument that the Socialist Party of Canada was already the dominant left wing party in British Columbia — a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush — fell on deaf ears.<sup>70</sup> The delegates were willing to endorse only a labour reform party. The important resolution was moved by secretary P.M. Draper. It recommended the adoption of the platform and principles of the Trades and Labor Congress since it contained « the epitome of the best thought and effort of organized labor during the period of its existence and struggles in Canada ». <sup>71</sup> The resolution further called for the sending of labour representatives to Parliament for « the direct purpose of conserving the interests of the working people in this country. <sup>72</sup> Draper's resolution passed 62 to 7 with 14 abstentions. D.J. O'Donoghue described its passage and the defeat of the Socialists as a victory for

« ... Labor in the large sense of the word — Labor that stands for the child and its education ; for the mother in the home ; for the family ; for the worker, male and female, in the shop, in the factory, in the mines — Labor that demands fair administration of the laws, equitable distribution of wealth, and enlightened citizenship generally — that Labor has won the day ... » <sup>73</sup>

The first important encounter between the Socialists and reform laborites within the Congress resulted in a clear victory for the latter.

(69) *Ibid.*, p. 82.

(70) *The Voice*, September 28, 1906.

(71) *Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1906, p. 83.

(72) *Ibid.*

(73) *The Voice*, October 26, 1906.

The provincial executives were instructed to organize founding conventions of the Canadian Labor Party in the respective provinces. Subsequent conventions in Manitoba and Ontario confirmed the labourites' victory. In British Columbia, however, where the Socialist Party of Canada occupied the ground floor, there was little room for a reform labour party and efforts to organize one met with a severe setback.

The Socialists, according to staunch T.L.C. unionists, had been guilty of the sin of dual unionism and their standing within the Congress had dropped accordingly. The Congress was now guilty of sponsoring « dual partyism » and it met with righteous censure in Socialist circles in the coast province. The fate of the proposed labour party in British Columbia was sealed at the annual convention of the British Columbia section of the Socialist Party of Canada in Nelson, in October. A committee on the proposed labour party brought in a recommendation of non-support. It asserted that no political party could « correctly express » the labour movement unless it stood for « the abolition of capitalist exploitation and the wage system under which it is effected ». <sup>74</sup> According to the delegates, the published account of the proceedings of the Congress indicated that the above object was not shared by the sponsors of the labour party project. The setting up of labour parties was a calculated plot « to deceive, confuse, and mislead the workers into a line of action that not only cannot relieve them from the stress of capitalist exploitation, but must inevitably tend to a prolongation of their present miseries, and their further degradation... » <sup>75</sup>

Instead of boycotting the founding convention of the British Columbia section of the Canadian Labor Party on October 29th, the Socialists decided to attend. The convention was called to order by G.F. Gray, Congress vice-president from British Columbia, who was determined to « stand for straight labor, labor and labor only ». <sup>76</sup> Representation heavily favoured the moderate coast unions who made up 37 out of the 47 delegates present. <sup>77</sup> There were only nine delegates from the radical interior, but they were not lacking in energy. Every interior delegate refused office so that they might remain on the floor and have their vote and say. <sup>78</sup> Before the meeting had been called to

(74) *Western Clarion*, October 20, 1906.

(75) *Ibid.*

(76) *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 30, 1906.

(77) *Ibid.*, October 29, 1906.

(78) *Vancouver World*, October 29, 1906.

order, a lively discussion was precipitated by delegate W.F. McKenzie who moved that an Alderman Williams from Vancouver be appointed chairman in place of Gray.<sup>79</sup> The pure labourites claimed the right to the position as vice-president of the British Columbia section of the Congress. Gray was unseated. Several letters were read soon after from unions not represented, one of which, the Mount Sickers Miners Union, condemned the convention entirely and placed on record its opposition to the creation of a «second labor party».<sup>80</sup> William McKenzie of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners then moved that voting be conducted according to numerical strength of the unions represented rather than on the basis of one man, one vote.<sup>81</sup> Representative Mills pleaded with the delegates that the interior unions had paid ten times as much as local unions to send delegates to the convention and that it would be better to reorganize the convention than «to force something down the necks of the interior delegates which would stink in the nostrils of the delegates for all time».<sup>82</sup> The proportional representation resolution carried 26 to 23, thereby placing the preponderance of voting power in the hands of the few delegates of the Miners who now controlled 81 out of the 142 votes.<sup>83</sup> «Never before in the history of the labor movement in British Columbia» declared Gray, «has such a surprise been sprung as that so cunningly arranged by the Socialists for yesterday's labor convention in the labor hall».<sup>84</sup>

Possessed of a majority, the Socialists wasted little time in extinguishing the fire of «dual partyism». They introduced the following resolution dissolving the new political party:

«Whereas the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress at its 22nd annual convention, held in Victoria, British Columbia, September 17-21, 1906, took steps to organize a labor party in the province, and this convention has been called in compliance with that action; and whereas no political party can correctly express the labor movement unless it stands for the abolition of capitalist exploitation and the wage system under which it is affected; and whereas, a labor party is already in existence, which does stand for that change, and which

(79) *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 29, 1906.

(80) *Vancouver World*, October 30, 1906.

(81) *Western Clarion*, October 30, 1906.

(82) *Vancouver World*, October 30, 1906.

(83) *Ibid.*

(84) *Ibid.*

has received the most emphatic endorsement possible from the different labor organizations throughout the province, inasmuch as nearly every labor organization in the province has written to the representatives of that party in the local legislature requesting them to take up their grievances and endeavor to get legislation passed for the betterment of their conditions, thereby showing their confidence in the said party as a labor party ; therefore be it

Resolved that in the opinion of this convention it is unwise to organize another labor party as it would cause confusion among the working class, thus dividing their vote, so rendering it ineffective ; and be it further

Resolved that we recommend to the working class throughout the province the careful study and investigation of the principles and platform of the Socialist Party of Canada. That we further recommend the earnest study of the principles and program of Socialism, as we believe that in the accomplishment of its aims lies the only true and permanent solution of the labor problem.

Gray led the pure labourite assault on the resolution. He had been instructed by his unions to « stand for straight labor, labor and labor only », and proceeded to do so.<sup>86</sup> He held up New Zealand as an example of a straight labour paradise. The Canadian Labor Party would be formed, he maintained, if there were only six straight labour delegates to form it. The straight labourites were defeated 99 to 41.<sup>87</sup> Gray and 20 other straight labour delegates left the room and the convention, leaving a socialist rump of 25.<sup>88</sup> Delegate Frank P. Slavin of Esquimaux, an ex-heavyweight champion of the world, informed the socialists that he thought he was fighting with honest men and had helped them to get the proportionate voting. « If that was the tricky way of Socialism, he wanted none of it ».<sup>89</sup> The bolters went across the hallway and formed their labour party. The resolution was again put and passed 90 to 12 with 48 absent.

The socialist coup in British Columbia was not duplicated in either Manitoba or Ontario. In the coast province, the spirit of independent laborism was relatively weak, and the newly formed labour party soon became a paper organization. As early as 1903, delegate J.H. Watson reported to the Trades and Labor Congress that « the unions (in British

(85) *Ibid.*

(86) *Ibid.*

(87) *Ibid.*

(88) *Ibid.*

(89) *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 30, 1906.

Columbia) are strong, so far as numbers go, but what with Gritism, Toryism and Socialism, the spirit of political independence is weak ». <sup>90</sup> In Ontario and Manitoba, Gritism and Toryism were strong, but socialism was weak among the few old country artisans who looked to the British Independent Labour Party model. On October 15th, a meeting was held in Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Labor Party was formed. <sup>91</sup> *The Voice* reported that the meeting was called early « because there were already persons at work here on the same lines... » <sup>92</sup> The meeting was populated with « many old-countrymen who made evident their determination to support a movement similar to the one with which they had hitherto been associated ». <sup>93</sup> A small socialist group led by L.T. English objected to the new creation, but was defeated.

The founding convention of the Ontario branch of the Canadian Labor Party was held on Good Friday in 1907. There were present 600 delegates from Toronto, Hamilton, Stratford, Berlin, Guelph, Sault Ste. Marie and many other cities and towns. <sup>94</sup> Secretary-treasurer Draper of the T.L.C. moved the resolution calling for the creation of the new party and took the occasion to congratulate the men of Hamilton on electing Allen Studholme to the provincial legislature. The platform of the Trades and Labor Congress was adopted. James Simpson moved the endorsement of the platform of the Socialist Party of Canada. Simpson's amendment, according to *The Voice*, was received with « about as much courtesy that a hornet would be by ladies at an afternoon sewing circle ». <sup>95</sup> The Congress vice-president was given a good hearing when he first rose, but when he came to the clauses which dealt with the electoral ethics of the Socialist Party, there ensued a bitter debate. Congress ex-president Flett stated he could not understand how any man could get up and try to square the principles of the trade unions with those of socialists. He referred to socialists as men who « shout their doctrines at us from every soap box on the street corner; these men are the proverbial Bay Tree, they spring up and flourish for a while and then disappear ». Other delegates asked whether it would not be in

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(90) *Proceedings of the 19th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1903, p. 31.

(91) *The Voice*, October 19, 1906.

(92) *Ibid.*

(93) *Ibid.*

(94) *Ibid.*, April 5, 1907.

(95) *Ibid.*

order to move that the platform of the Conservative party be endorsed. When the votes were counted, only 34 favoured Simpson's resolution.<sup>96</sup>

The Socialist blow against « dual partyism » in British Columbia had not only frustrated the pure labourites in that area, but increased the antagonism of their Eastern colleagues within the Trades and Labor Congress. When the 1907 Congress convention met in September in Winnipeg, the ideal place for a reconciliation between East and West, the question agitating the minds of the many delegates was whether the Congress would legitimate the action of the socialists in British Columbia and restore harmony on the basis of a recognition of the principle of provincial autonomy.

The intention of the Victoria convention had plainly been to establish a « straight labor party » independent of any other socialist or labor parties in existence, and this had been accomplished in Manitoba and Ontario. The provincial executives had been invested with authority to summon the conventions and they discharged their duties in British Columbia as well as Manitoba and Ontario. It was the intention of the socialist activists at the Winnipeg convention to have the Congress recognize the principle of provincial autonomy. The provincial executive committee of the Congress would therefore have two responsibilities; to call the founding convention of the provincial section of the party and to be bound by the decisions of the founding convention. If accepted, the latter provision would legitimize the coup of the Socialist Party in British Columbia.

The main debate centred over a resolution introduced by R.P. Pettipiece endorsing the principle of independent political action with the collective ownership of the means of life as its ultimate aim but recognizing provincial autonomy in the matter of political affiliation. The function of the Congress provincial executives was to implement the policy formulated in their respective jurisdictions.<sup>97</sup> The passage of the resolution would have legitimated the socialist coup at the October British Columbia convention and ratified the Socialist Party in British Columbia « as the logical outcome of conditions in that province ». <sup>98</sup> With a convention pending in Alberta, it would clear the

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(96) *Ibid.*

(97) *Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, 1907*, pp. 77-78.

(98) *The Voice*, September 27, 1907.



way for a socialist victory there. There was strong support for the socialist compromise solution and a fierce debate ensued. Sam Landers of the Resolution Committee, no friend of the socialists, stated that after lengthy consideration, the committee felt it should be sent out to the floor with no recommendation.<sup>99</sup> On the floor he supported it. Pettipiece demanded that the delegates declare themselves on the subject so that the socialists « might know where the Labor party stood ». The Socialist Party of Canada, according to Pettipiece, was the expression of the advanced thought of the labor movement and therefore demanded official recognition. The endorsement of the resolution would allow each province to « frame its own policy to suit its needs or limitations ».<sup>100</sup> Delegates Gustav Francq and Joseph Marks opposed it as a fetter on the Labor Party in Montreal. Delegate Bartlett spoke in favour and declared that the British Independent Labor Party which brought together the trade unionists and socialists had « very frankly and emphatically declared its ultimate aim to be the socialization of the means of life ». Bartlett's facts were hotly contested by delegates and he produced evidence in the form of the declaration of principles of the I.L.P. When the vote was put, the straight trade unionist position won 51 to 39.<sup>101</sup> The strong showing made by the « provincial autonomists » indicated the growing toleration of socialist principles and recognition of their strength within the Congress.

The provincial executives in Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario had discharged their duties over the previous year. In Saskatchewan and Alberta, little had been done. Unionism was weak in Saskatchewan, a predominantly rural province and the provincial executive committee reported that before anything could be done of a permanent nature politically, « we must have better trade organization throughout the Province, and to that end has our effort been directed the past year ».<sup>102</sup>

In Alberta no founding convention of a labor party had been held in 1907 owing to the lack of interest taken by the trade organizations in Calgary and Edmonton.<sup>103</sup> The provincial executive committee

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(99) *Ibid.*

(100) *Ibid.*

(101) *Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1907, p. 77.

(102) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

reported that labour had been able to secure legislation from the provincial Liberal Party which « was to some extent favourable to labor ». <sup>104</sup> A labour party had come into existence but it died a natural death because « the leading men were strong socialists and they carried on an educational campaign that could not fail to convince the members that Socialism was the only road to complete emancipation of the workers ». <sup>105</sup> Initial contacts were made in Alberta during 1907 between the trades unions and the farmers who had organized a Society of Equity. The provincial executive committee held several meetings with the executive of the Society of Equity at which the platform of the proposed labour party was discussed at some length, the Equity expressing themselves as « favouring it with very few changes ». <sup>106</sup> The Congress executive later invited the Society of Equity to send a fraternal delegate to the Winnipeg convention. R.C. Owens, an old populist, appeared in Winnipeg during convention week and shared the platform at a meeting of the Canadian Labor Party with Congress president Alphonse Verville and vice-president James Simpson. <sup>107</sup> A special committee was created « to devise a feasible proposition whereby the Congress and the Canadian Society for Equity — representing the two great industrial forces of Canada — may work in harmony and cooperation », and a fraternal delegate was dispatched to attend the next convention of the farmers. <sup>108</sup>

The Alberta executive of the Trades and Labor Congress issued a call for a convention to be held in Calgary on December 14. Trade unions, trades councils, and the Society of Equity all sent representatives. R.P. Pettipiece, the new western organizer, used his position for good political purposes and played a leading role in organizing the convention and marshalling the socialist forces. Pettipiece was Chairman of the

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(103) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

(104) *Ibid.*

(105) *Ibid.*, p. 25.

(106) *Ibid.*, p. 26.

(107) At the Congress convention, Owens made a strong appeal for Farm-Labour unity: « The laborer and farmer constitutes nine-tenths of the people of this Dominion and if we worked solidly together, how could the other tenth oppress us... I recognize only two classes; the workers and the idlers. I represent the workers. I would like to live to see the day when there will be only one class. The men who toil and create the wealth. There is a difference between the producer of wealth and the accumulation of wealth. The fight between them has to be fought. If we exercise common sense and proper organization the fight will be easy for the producer ». *Ibid.*, p. 43.

(108) *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Committee on Resolutions.<sup>109</sup> Some 35 resolutions were submitted and these were boiled down to two; one calling for the adoption of the platform of the Socialist Party of Canada, the other favouring government ownership and a graduated land tax. The Committee, staffed with socialists, recommended concurrence. W.R. Ball, an Equity delegate from Strathcona, led the attack on the endorsement of socialist principles. He thought the proposed platform was too advanced for the farmers who worked « body and soul for profit and the platform suggested does not favour working for profit ».<sup>110</sup> The other farmers' delegates either opposed the platform or would accept it only under another name. R.C. Owens favoured the convention drawing up for itself a more moderate platform rather than accepting the ready-made British Columbia variety proposed by Pettipiece and ex-MP William Davidson, but signified his support of the socialist program if adopted. He further argued that only cowards would adopt the platform without the name. By a vote of 37 to 10, the Socialists swept the convention. The farmers soon after deserted both the Socialist Party of Alberta and the cause of farm-labor cooperation. At the Halifax convention of the Congress, R.P. Pettipiece referred to the farmers of the Northwest as being colossally ignorant of the labour problem,<sup>111</sup> and called for more vigorous and thorough propaganda work in rural areas.

The socialist victory in Alberta, like its predecessor in British Columbia ran counter to the policy of the Trades and Labor Congress, which was to organize a straight labour party. Western organizer Pettipiece had convened and dominated the Alberta Socialist convention and the retention of Pettipiece indicated how far the Congress was willing to tolerate socialist deviation for the sake of regional integration. The differences between socialists and laborites outside the Congress had not been settled, however, by the time the Congress met in 1908 in Halifax and both groups were still contending for official endorsement.

At the September T.L.C. convention, the relation of the Independent laborites and socialists to the national legislative mouthpiece of labour was again the subject of fierce debate. The question was broached by S. Landers from Hamilton who moved that the Congress endorse the

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(109) *The Voice*, December 27, 1907.

(110) *Ibid.*

(111) *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1908, p. 78.

independent labour candidates nominated for the Federal elections, due in a few weeks who, if elected would form a separate party in the Dominion Parliament.<sup>113</sup> Landers made a strong speech showing the progress made everywhere through independent political action. Amid applause and cries of « Good Boy! » he stated that every time a socialist candidate was put up in his constituency, he had voted for him.<sup>114</sup> He asked for similar treatment from the socialists. R.P. Pettipiece followed Landers and stated that a Party could not be better than the principle it represented and that « as soon as the labor party was prepared for the collective ownership of what is used collectively it would be entitled to the support of the organized workers ».<sup>115</sup> Pettipiece closed his dissertation with the assurance that he would as much vote for John D. Rockefeller as for Delegate Landers of the Dominion Trade and Labor Congress. Landers was supported by Allan Studholme, fresh from re-election as a provincial MLA in East Hamilton, who accused the socialists F.H. Sherman and Pettipiece of representing an in-group « We party » that contradicted their belief in the brotherhood of man.<sup>116</sup>

## Conclusion

It was at this juncture in the debate that J. Keir Hardie, the veteran British Labor leader who attended as an observer, rose and made an impassioned plea for labour unity such as had been launched in Britain. He argued that in England, when the term socialism had no such restricted meaning as in Canada, they had not had the Canadian experience as to reciprocal support and went on to illustrate that socialism was a process of evolution to which the union of the working class was a long step. He maintained that in Canada there were all the materials for a great socialist movement, but that with the present attitude of the believers in socialism and the champions of organized labor pure and simple, there developed a divorce of interest resulting in permanent injury to both. The position of the Socialist Party of Canada he described as that of phariseeism; the autocratic attempt to force their shibboleth upon the people. He was equally critical of opportunism. If the Canadian movement was to be a successful movement, Hardie maintained, it must be a genuine movement. The men who went to

(112) *The Voice*, June 12, 1908.

(113) *Ibid.*, October 16, 1908.

(114) *Ibid.*

(115) *Ibid.*

(116) *Ibid.*

Parliament must be prepared to forswear every consideration of self-interest; « the acceptance of emoluments » from the classes which the labouring masses had banded together to oppose. Keir Hardie closed with a plea for the financing of the political movement by the trade unions.<sup>117</sup>

Hardie's fierce attack on both old-party opportunism and dogmatic socialism was followed by a conciliatory speech by James Simpson who claimed that the precipitation of the resolution on the convention at that time was unwise. Landers agreed and withdrew the resolution. As chairman of the Socialist executive, Pettipiece advocated, amid applause, « the holding of a convention of Socialists and trades unionists at some central point to... thresh the whole matter out... » pledging himself as chairman to abide by the decision of the convention.<sup>118</sup>

The proposed meeting was never held. At subsequent T.L.C. conventions preceding World War I, no serious attempt was made to either revive the moribund Canadian Labor Party, endorse the Socialist Party of Canada, or settle the differences between feuding political factions. So long as the radical political movement was split into warring sets, Liberal and Conservative labour leaders could rest assured that the T.L.C. would remain clear of dubious ventures into radical politics. But the war crisis, which threatened the very life of the organized labour movement, restored the vigor and unity of the radical minority, and paved the way for the T.L.C.'s re-entry into independent politics in 1917.<sup>119</sup>

## LE CONGRÈS DES MÉTIERS ET DU TRAVAIL DU CANADA ET L'ACTION POLITIQUE (1898-1908)

Cette étude porte sur l'action politique du CMTC et sur ses relations avec le mouvement politique socialiste dans la partie anglophone du Canada entre 1898 et 1908. Sur le plan politique les chefs syndicaux du CMTC étaient plutôt de tendance libérale quand les partis travaillistes indépendants et socialistes apparurent vers 1898. Les activités des adhérents de ces partis à l'intérieur du mouvement ouvrier

(117) *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Session of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada*, 1908, pp. 80-1.

(118) *The Voice*, October 16, 1908.

(119) See the author's « Registration, Conscription, and Independent Labour Politics, 1916-1917 », *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, June, 1966.

constitua un sérieux défi pour les chefs syndicaux et aussi pour leurs politiques partisans traditionnelles.

C'est du Manitoba et de la Colombie Britannique que vinrent les premières pressions pour l'adoption par le CMTC d'un engagement politique plus indépendant. En effet dans ces deux provinces des politiciens travaillistes radicaux avaient obtenu un certain succès. Un référendum sur la représentation ouvrière indépendante fut pris au congrès du CMTC en 1899 mais les résultats furent insatisfaisants. Une résolution adoptée au congrès de 1900 favorisait l'élection du président du CMTC Ralph Smith, à la Chambre des Communes en tant que représentant d'un parti ouvrier indépendant.

A partir de ce moment l'engagement politique du CMTC se concrétisa et se développa rapidement. Au congrès de Brantford en 1901 l'exécutif du Congrès ratifia le principe de la représentation ouvrière indépendante et proposa une modernisation radicale des techniques de « lobbying ». Ce nouvel état d'esprit dans le CMTC s'amplifia l'année suivante au congrès de Berlin quand les Chevaliers du Travail, groupe conservateur d'unionistes, furent expulsés du CMTC et que Ralph Smith, sympathisant libéral fut remplacé par John Flett à la présidence du Congrès.

Ce virement vers la gauche effectué par le Congrès ne sanctionnait pas pour autant le socialisme ou le mouvement socialiste auquel était associée une faible minorité à l'intérieur du CMTC. Celle-ci fit des tentatives pour lancer le mouvement syndical vers la gauche. Ces tentatives échouèrent parce que leurs promoteurs en Colombie Britannique favorisaient autant le syndicalisme industriel que le syndicalisme de métier. Cette prise de position fut interprétée par les membres du CMTC comme du socialisme politique et comme contribuant à diviser le mouvement ouvrier au lieu de l'unifier. C'est pour ces raisons que les chefs socialistes furent tenus à l'écart des congrès du CMTC. Dans les années qui suivirent le célèbre congrès de Berlin, le CMTC continua à soutenir le principe de la représentation indépendante mais évita d'endosser le nouveau mouvement socialiste ou de mettre sur pied un organisme pour créer un parti ouvrier national.

En 1906 cependant la conjoncture était favorable à un affrontement entre les tenants de la représentation ouvrière et les socialistes à l'intérieur du Congrès. Il eut lieu au congrès de Victoria en Colombie Britannique. A ce congrès on vota en faveur de la création d'un parti ouvrier canadien et on rejeta le Parti socialiste du Canada et ce même si en Colombie Britannique il était considéré comme le « bras politique normal du mouvement ouvrier organisé ». Des congrès subséquents furent tenus par les sections provinciales du Parti ouvrier canadien en Alberta, au Manitoba, en Colombie Britannique et en Ontario. Les socialistes dominèrent les congrès qui eurent lieu en Alberta et en Colombie Britannique et c'est pourquoi ces mêmes congrès reconnurent le Parti Socialiste du Canada comme représentant le travail organisé sur le plan politique. On essaya en vain de légitimer cette ingérence socialiste aux congrès du CMTC en 1907 et en 1908. Dans les autres congrès qui précédèrent la première guerre mondiale, aucun effort ne fut fait pour relancer le Parti ouvrier canadien agonisant, reconnaître le Parti socialiste du Canada ou régler les chicanes entre les factions politiques traditionnelles.